United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/867
12 April 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Advance team of United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission due to arrive in Kuwait.

◆ Security Council President announces that formal cease-fire is effective in Persian Gulf conflict.

◆ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) secures pledges of enough emergency food aid for all refugees in Turkey and Iran for up to 30 days.

◆ Secretary-General reiterates call for meeting of High Contracting Parties of 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on protection of civilians in time of war, as a way to guarantee protection of Palestinians in occupied territories.

◆ Human Rights Committee, ending forty-first session, calls on Iraq to submit "without further delay" report on human rights situation in that country.

◆ Secretary-General to travel to France for meeting of Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, and to address European Parliament.

◆ Talks between Government of El Salvador and Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) reported to be proceeding intensively.

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A United Nations official told correspondents today that an advance team of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) to travel to the region had been assembled in Cyprus by the Chief Military Observer, Major-General Gunther Greindl. There had been delays. General Greindl and his team were now in Amman and were due to arrive in Kuwait City tomorrow morning, 13 April.

The official said the team was about 30-strong, including military and political advisers, logistics personnel and administrative staff. General Greindl would confer with goverament authorities in Kuwait City, after which

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he would travel to Baghdad for similar consultations with Iraqi government officials.

On humanitarian efforts, the United Nations official said the mission, led by Eric Suy, had left London this morning for Amman, and would travel to Baghdad tomorrow. Another mission, led by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, was expected to arrive in Baghdad on Sunday, 14 April.

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The Security Council last night formally accepted Iraq's communication of 6 April, in which Iraqi Ambassador Al-Anbari said his country had no choice but to accept the Council's resolution setting the terms for a cease-fire in the Persian Gulf.

In a statement on behalf of its members, Council President Paul Noterdaeme of Belgium said the Iraqi Ambassador had confirmed his Government's "irrevocable and unqualified acceptance" of resolution 687 (1991).

He said Council members had accordingly asked him to note that the conditions established in the resolution had been met, and that the formal cease-fire was effective.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) has announced that it has secured pledges of enough emergency food aid to feed all Kurdish refugees in Turkey and Iran for up to 30 days. It said that most of the food would be in Turkey and Iran in the next two days.

In a press release issued today, WFP Executive Director James Ingram said a "huge effort" was still required to get the food to the border areas. The WFP emergency operations covered airlifts, cross-border truck convoys and the arrival of ships.

In a related development, the Government of Iran says the influx of Iraqi refugees has "surpassed all estimates and preparations, and has reached and indeed passed dangerous levels, jeopardizing the lives of tens of thousands of innocent human beings". In a letter to the Secretary-General yesterday, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said that so far about 900,000 Iraqis had crossed the border with Iran. He said even if the "negligible" international assistance so far received were to be increased, it was highly unlikely that any degree of local effort and international relief aid could meet the most primary requirements of "the wounded, sick, hungry and cold-stricken" refugees and "prevent the unfolding tragedy".

The Foreign Minister called for the voluntary repatriation of the refugees back to Iraq under the supervision of the United Nations.

The 12 member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) have informed the United Nations of their donation of $185 million in special assistance to refugees and displaced Iraqis, particularly Kurds.

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In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Jean Feyder, current Chairman of the European Council, said the grant had been given in view of the urgency and magnitude of the problem. He said a programme of special assistance had been launched in close cooperation with the competent international humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has repeated his call for a meeting of the High Contracting Parties of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war, as a way to guarantee the safety and protection of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

In a report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General said that during the period under review, from 20 December to 28 February, Israel continued to violate the Fourth Geneva Convention by which it was bound to protect the Palestinian population. He cited the continuation of such practices as deportations, administrative detentions and collective punishments, such as closure of schools and demolition of homes.

The Secretary-General said the Gulf crisis was economically "devastating" to the occupied territories, and politically Palestinian support for the Iraqis had led to increased tension for which the Palestinians paid a price. Although Israel had the right to self-defense and security measures, the report continues, it did not undertake adequate civil defense precautions on behalf of the Palestinians, and the imposed curfew caused "undue hardship".

The Secretary-General said that in the absence of a decision by Israel to fully apply the Convention's provisions, a meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention could enhance the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.

The report is based on observations made by the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Jean-Claude Aimé, who visited the area last month.

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The United Nations Human Rights Committee today ended a three-week session in New York during which it discussed, among other things, the protection of human rights of citizens of Hong Kong after the territory is transferred to China in 1997, and human rights violations following the 1989 United States intervention of Panama.

The 18-member expert body, which is charged with monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, also discussed emergency regulations being employed by the Governments of India, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom to combat terrorism. Concern was expressed over the treatment by Sweden of drug addicts and alcoholics as well as the handling by Panama of cases of AIDS.

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At its meeting yesterday, the Committee decided to request Iraq to submit by 15 June a report on the human rights situation in the country covering, in particular, its observance of the provisions of the Covenant relating to right to life and liberty, prohibition of torture and the right of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language.

The Committee said that, "taking into consideration recent and current events affecting the situation of human rights", it wished to receive Iraq's third periodic report (due since April last year) in time for discussion at the Committee's next session in July.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar leaves New York at the weekend for a week of official engagements in Europe. During a visit to France, he will preside over the regular spring session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in Paris from Wednesday until Friday. On Tuesday, he will address the European Parliament in Strasbourg. He is also to receive an honorary law degree from Bordeaux University.

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A United Nations official announced today that talks between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion National (FMLN), under way in Mexico City, were proceeding intensively. He said the talks, initiated on 4 April, were concentrating on the armed forces, constitutional reform and cease-fire arrangements.

The Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Alvaro De Soto, and Under-Secretary-General of Special Political Affairs, Marrack Goulding, were both conducting talks on cease-fire arrangements. After a weekend recess, the talks resume on Monday.

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